

Terrorism and its effect on the economy and population growth of Benue State Nigeria

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Nigeria, in its recent history, has been practically overwhelmed by the menace of terrorism. Its activities has severely affected the socio-economic structure of the middle belt, specifically Benue State. Terrorism has been a major factor contributing to decline in the economic and population growth of the region. Terrorism comes alive in cultural environments with high population growth rates and low socio-economic development.

Findings from this review indicate that rapid growth in population with acute environmental and socio-economic deprivation may be a factor contributing to cultural deviance, frustration and anger of some sectors of the community. In extreme situations some vulnerable communities have witnessed a chequered history of sporadic unrest through acts of terrorism. However, the bone of contention of this study is to highlight the killings in Benue State and its effect on the population and the economic development in general between January 1st 2018 - May 31st 2018.

What is terrorism?

Terrorism can be seen as an inducement of fear and anxiety aimed to control and direct a civil population. Some say it is a tactic and strategy to subjugate and overrun subsets of society. Historical and sociopolitical antecedents abound evidencing it is a crime against humanity. Some have claimed it is a call to 'holy duty' allegedly sanctioned by their religious beliefs. The reality is , terrorism are acts invoked by a select few well placed 'war loads' who employ their lackeys, sworn to subservience in blind pursuit of an ever elusive empire. Terrorists are psychopaths and derive pleasure in the mutilation and murder of other humans. The expectation that their activities can be fettered, sadly looses sight of this premise.

Whatever the argument, terrorism has been a reoccurring phenomenon in Nigeria. Its effects has ravaged a larger part of the northern and middle-belt states and now creeping southerly. Its occurrence has found expression in the emergence of Boko Haram and the so-called 'Herdsman' insurgency. This sectarian incursion has wrecked immense havoc in Benue and adjoining states. Their weaponry and particularly use of military hardware raises questions as to funding and sponsorship. The Nigerian government and its security agencies have practically failed to safe guard the lives of many and continue to do so. Their efforts in combating this menace has sadly, not really produced any semblance of success.

In the light of all this drama, the Nigeria government has requested for foreign assistance from countries like U.S.A., Israel and EU to quell this insecurity, yet this region still suffers a high level of insecurity till date.

Benue State - Geopolitics

Benue state was created on 3rd February 1976 by the military administration of late General Muritala Mohammed. It is made up of 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) with an estimated population of about 4,253,641 as reported following the 2006 national census. Its inhabitants are the Tiv, Idoma and Igede people, named after their respective languages. Agriculture forms the backbone of the state economy with about 70% of the working population being farmers.

Recent spate of death by terrorists acts

Between January 1st 2018 and May 31st2018, being the period of interest of this review, the following names were published and reported by the senate as deaths through acts of terrorism.

Deaths by terrorist acts in Benue state Jan-May 2018

Month 2018Numbers KilledTown/village

January 173Logo and Guma

January 54tseAkombo, tse, Vii and tseAgole village

January 82Two policeman, Logo

January 141Makurdi

January 165Guma, Logo and Okpokwo LGA

February 52Guma

February 102-

February 122 -

March 525Okpokwu

March 137Guma

March 245Markurdi

April 410Gwer West

April 530Gwer West

April 72Agatu

April 91Guma

April 1010no data

April 122Markurdi

April 144Logo

April 171Logo

April 191Gwer East

April 2031Goma

April 2519Gwer East

April 2538Guwa.

-- (Daily Post, May 11th, 2018.Wale Odunsi).

Having enumerated these killings, it remains to be seen, what the effect of these killings would be in the short to medium term, on the socio-economic and population growth of Benue State? The immediate and ongoing psychological [trauma](#) suffered by the families, communities and the state is not being addressed. Certainly not by the Federal government whose epileptic response essentially was an uncommon display of insensitivity and calumny. The herdsmen in search of grazing lands for food for their cattle stray into farm land and willfully trampled upon crops which are destroyed leaving the farmer bereft of a harvest. This as expected, angered farmers and such frustration is taken out on the herdsmen or their cattle in retaliation.

The economic implication of this issue cannot be readily quantified. The loss of lives and property is irreplaceable. Families and communities have been displaced and forced to become refugees in their own state. There is a resultant drain on the state. Benue which prides itself as the nations Food Basket has been forced into a crises due to increase in cost of food across the state. Instability itself discourages investment by private and well meaning multinational industries. Movement of people out of the state would affect the profitability of business establishment such as banks which have been closing down. Skilled workers are forced to relocate to safer provinces further decimating human resources in the state. Without question the consequences of these multiple effects on the population of the state in the short term would be significant.

Lest they forget

When the January 1st massacre took place the world expected the commander in chief of the arm forces to visit and sympathize with the people. Well he did not as would have been expected. The state governor led a delegation to visit the president. Reportedly the response did not reflect the urgency the situation demanded. This begs the question what the government stood for. Some have indeed intimated a covert sympathy for the herdsmen as an explanation for the lukewarm reaction of the president. The opposition People Democratic Party

condemned the government for its failure to act upon early warning signs and threats. The opposition party also accused the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) of incompetence and insensitivity (The APC party in a show of ineptitude had gathered to propose another four year term of office for the president). A view proffered by some including state leaders was that the herdsmen were not concerned about grazing, but in occupying Benue as part of a wider strategy to *annihilate the people and acquire their land*.

As expected, Benue State remains a place to watch in the forthcoming elections. There is every possibility of people selling their vote due to hardship, lack and terror experienced in the state. They say whichever way it goes, the chances of APC remains lean. The APC wrestled power from the PDP in Benue state in 2015 because the people had become disenchanted with failed promises and programs of the latter. However, for obvious reasons, the same people have lost faith and confidence in APC and are patiently waiting to show them the way out through the ballot box. Nat Apir, an elder state man in Benue state, states that owing to the activities of the herdsmen in Benue, the people are disenchanted with the party APC and even if they vote it will be negligible numbers because the people have made up their mind about the party and will not be voting APC come 2019. Sadly neither parties have positioned themselves to resolve the problem of terrorism in Nigeria as history will show.

In conclusion, the insurgency in Benue State has had considerable impact in its geopolitical as well as its socioeconomic well being. The economic impact is immense. There has been immeasurable loss of human lives and wanton destruction of property and infrastructure. The reduction of direct investment with stifling of public revenue and the diversion of resources towards maintaining law and order combined makes the short term prospects of recovery dire to say the least. Its nearly impossible, in the current political climate to predict what the prospects would be in the next few years.

The paucity of a coherent narrative as a nation makes the prospects of a resolution distant and elusive. Perhaps these occurrences would birth a new order; where truth

and integrity would be the arbiter of the order. Not in political parties whose members have only sort to 'cross-carpet' drifting from one pole to another but never seeking to meet the basic needs of the common man. If anything, communities should stand to elect their own independent leaders; accountable to them and to their families. Then and only then would there be meaningful change.

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